

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 12819 091837Z

63

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00

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INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04 USIA-06

SAM-01 OES-03 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 PA-01 PRS-01

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4222

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY

AMEMBASSY NATO

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 12819

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ECIN, ECON, ETRD, ENRG, CZ, UR

SUBJECT: CZECHOSLOVAK WORK ON GAS PIPELINES

REF: (A) PRAGUE 2161; (B) MOSCOW A-350, SEPTEMBER 8, 1974

1. ON BASIS LIMITED INFORMATION AVAILABLE HERE, WE CONCUR WITH EMBASSY PRAGUE'S SPECULATION (PARA 6 REFTEL A) THAT SOVIETS HAVE PERMITTED CZECHOSLOVAKS TO GREATLY REDUCE THEIR MANPOWER COMMITMENT FOR CONSTRUCTION OF ORENBURG GAS PIPELINE IN USSR SO THAT THEY CAN CONCENTRATE ON EXPANSION OF TRANSIT PIPELINES THROUGH CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 12819 091837Z

2. ALTHOUGH THE TRANSIT LINES WILL BE LOCATED ON CZECHOSLOVAK TERRITORY, THEIR PRIMARY BENIFICARY WILL BE THE SOVIET UNION WHICH WILL BE EARNING HARD CURRENCY FROM INCREASED EXPORTS OF GAS TO WESTERN EUROPE. WE FIND IT SOMEWHAT IRONIC, AND ALSO INDICATIVE OF WHERE SOVIET PRIORITIES LIE, THAT THE TRANSIT SYSTEM GETS PRIORITY OVER ORENBURG, ALTHOUGH THE LATTER HAS BEEN EXTENSIVELY BILLED BY SOVIET MEDIA AS AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF A FRATERNAL CEMA PROJECT WHICH WILL PROVIDE LOW-COST SOVIET ENERGY TO "SOCIALIST COUNTRIES."

FURTHERMORE, AS EMBASSY HAS REPORTED EARLIER, IT HAS RECENTLY BEEN ANNOUNCED THAT "SOCIALIST COUNTRIES" WILL RECEIVE ONLY ABOUT HALF OF ORENBURG OUTPUT. REMAINDER WILL BE EXPORTED BY SOVIETS THROUGH THE CEMA-BUILT ORENBURG LINE, AND THE CZECH TRANSIT LINES, TO WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES.

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